

MINUTES
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE WORK SESSION
May 3, 2021
City Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller, Jason Baskin, Michael Postma, Oballa Oballa, Joyce Poshusta and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert and Police Chief David McKichan

STAFF APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Park and Rec Director Kevin Nelson, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Assistant City Engineer Mitch Wenum, Human Resources Director Tricia Wiechmann and City Clerk Ann Kasel

OTHERS APPEARING ELECTRONICALLY: Austin Daily Herald

OTHERS PRESENT: Craig Popenhagen, Andy Majerus

Mayor King opened the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

Item No. 1 – Bow Fishing

Andy Majerus spoke to the Council in support of carp bow fishing. He stated the DNR allows bow carp fishing from a boat year-round as long as the boat is 150 feet away from a residence. He would like to be able to bow fish on the waterways in Austin. He stated he has a place to dispose of the carp.

Council Member Postma asked if it's done in the dark.

Mr. Majerus stated there are lights on boats and a trolling motor is used so it's quiet. He added that a lot of cities do not allow the activity from the shore.

Council Member Oballa asked what safety measures are taken.

Mr. Majerus stated there are navigational safety measures and the bow tension is lower.

Police Chief McKichan stated bow fishing from a boat would be the safest activity.

Parks and Recreation Director Kevin Nelson agreed that it would be preferred from a boat on East Side Lake and Mill Pond.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, to move forward a proposed bow fishing ordinance from boats on East Side Lake and Mill Pond. Carried.

The item will be on the May 19, 2021 agenda.

Item No. 2 – 2020 Audit Results

Craig Popenhagen with CliftonLarsonAllen, LLP presented the December 31, 2020 audit report noting our Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) has been given an award for many years, and there is no reason it should not qualify again this year. Mr. Popenhagen stated everything is in order and no findings occurred during the audit. He noted there were no deficit fund balances, and that the City has adequate fund balance based on state guidelines and best practices.

He reviewed the City's fund balance and stated the City is in a good financial position. He stated a 35 percent to 50 percent fund balance is recommended by the State Auditor's office and the City has a 74 percent fund balance, which is healthy for the City's finances.

He also reviewed the City's revenue sources and noted that the City receives \$8 million in local government aid. He stated the tax levy per capital scores very low at 225 out of 233 cities of comparable size in Minnesota.

The Council thanked Mr. Dankert and the finance staff for their excellent work.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert thanked the finance staff for all their hard work and the department heads for their compliance. He also thanked the Clerk's office for their input on cash receipts.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, recommending approval of the 2020 audit report. Carried.

The item will be placed on the May 17, 2021 Council Agenda.

Item No. 3 – Shawback Hazardous Housing

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace stated the property at 1004 11th Avenue SW has been identified as a hazardous structure due to a failing foundation. The owners of the property were notified of the needed repairs but were not able to complete the work. The City identified the property as hazardous and obtained a court order to repair or remove the home. The property is also behind in real estate taxes and the residents do not want to leave their home. The property is likely to go to tax forfeiture in the next few years.

Ms. Wallace asked for Council direction as to the disposition of the house. The City could let it go to tax forfeiture and make no repairs; repair the home or demolish the home at City cost.

She stated there are another six demolition orders from the Court that may potentially be demolished.

City Administrator Craig Clark the City tries to work with residents with gaining compliance with the ordinances.

Council Member Jason Baskin asked what is the chance that repairs could be done this year.

Ms. Wallace stated it may be difficult to remove them from the property and contractors may already be booked.

Council Member Baskin also asked if there is risk to the homeowners to remain in the home.

Ms. Wallace stated the property does not meet code but she was unaware of the risk.

Council Member Oballa asked if they have extended family that can help them.

Ms. Wallace stated there is an adult son that lives in the property but isn't able to assist with the situation.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated there is no good solution for the situation.

The Council directed Ms. Wallace to have another conversation with the property owner and report back to Council.

Item No. 4 – 4th Street NW & 3rd Avenue NW Project

Public Works Director Steven Lang provided an update on the 4th Street & 3rd Avenue NW Project stating the City has been working with Austin Public Schools, Pacelli Catholic Schools and St. Augustine Church for the final details. He stated the City will remove 3rd Avenue from 4th Street west to mid-block where sidewalk will be installed. A grassy area will be extended into the removed area. There will be bump outs on all four corners of the intersection. The City will also remove the parking lane between the high school and annex and install bump outs mid-block.

He stated he is working with Pacelli and St. A's to develop a flow pattern for student drop off.

For Council information only; no additional Council action needed at this time.

Item No. 5 – Minnesota Energy Resources Corp Property Title Corrections

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated Minnesota Energy Resources Corporation is working to clear the title of land on 4th Street SE that the City has easements on and public right of way near. Mr. Lang stated the City is working with the company to correct the issues.

For Council information only; no additional Council action needed at this time.

Item No. 6 – Administrative Report

None.

Item No. 7 - Open Discussion

None.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Postma, adjourning the meeting at 7:46 p.m. Carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann M. Kasel
City Clerk